

Remarks by the UN Women Staff Council Representatives

2026 Executive Board First Session

Madam President, UN Women Executive Leadership, distinguishes delegates and steamed colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Executive Board today.

At the outset, we note that our remarks are fully aligned with the statement delivered by the Chair of the Joint Staff Council during the first session of the Executive Board for UNDP, UNFPA, and UNOPS.

Alongside my colleague, Athena Rebutiaco Cortez, I would like to acknowledge the constructive engagement of UN Women's Executive Leadership during a period of profound institutional change and mounting challenges faced by billions of women and girls. We appreciate the sustained dialogue with staff representatives, the openness to consultation, and the concrete measures taken to support personnel through transition. These actions reaffirm that people remain central to UN Women's mandate and effectiveness.

Since 2024, the Pivot to the Regions and Countries has been one of the most significant transformations at UN Women. As Staff Council Representatives, we established a consultation platform, ensuring that personnel perspectives informed the Pivot Human Resources Support Plan. We recognize the progress achieved, as well as the professionalism, resilience, and adaptability demonstrated by colleagues throughout this transition.

To further reinforce the link between personnel and the delivery of our mandate, it is essential to reflect on lessons learned from the Pivot, particularly the importance of early, consistent, and genuinely inclusive consultation as a core element of reform.

This is especially relevant as UN Women navigates externally driven UN80 proposals amid financial constraints of unprecedented severity and growing uncertainty across the multilateral system. This uncertainty is being felt most acutely in country offices, where capacity is already stretched. Experience shows that, particularly in merger discussions, efforts to achieve efficiencies can unintentionally erode critical operational capacity. In UN Women country offices, our personnel are not administrative overhead; they are the core delivery capacity, providing the leadership, contextual knowledge, and technical expertise required to deliver results at scale. Structural or merger decisions must therefore strengthen, rather than weaken, this capacity. In practical terms, this means protecting country representatives and their teams to preserve institutional knowledge, sustain mandate delivery, and ensure UN Women's continued impact for women and girls.

Within this broader UN80 context, it is important to recognize that this process may differ from internally driven reform efforts. From a personnel perspective, this underscores the need for early, transparent, and inclusive engagement, while safeguarding UN Women's distinct normative mandate and the specialized expertise that underpins effective delivery, building on the principles of inclusiveness and transparency.

From a feminist perspective, meaningful participation is not optional; it is essential. Reforms are more credible, durable, and effective when they are informed by lived experience and when personnel are engaged from the outset.

In this spirit, we highlight four guiding principles as UN Women moves forward.

First, cost-saving measures should prioritize reductions in non-essential expenditures and high-cost structures, rather than disproportionately affecting vulnerable contract modalities. Protecting filled positions, including General Service and affiliated personnel, is critical to delivery, continuity and institutional memory.

Second, equity must remain central across organizations, regions, duty stations, and contract types, avoiding the entrenchment of a two-tier workforce.

Third, expanded responsibilities must be matched with adequate support, as sustainable delivery depends on stability, realistic workloads and appropriate resources.

Fourth, the forthcoming UN Women People's Strategy offers a key opportunity to strengthen working conditions across contract modalities, consolidate progress on the PSA modality in the regions, and extend it to headquarters to enhance stability, career development, and fairness.

Ultimately, the success of our new Strategic Plan 2026–2029, the Pivot, UN80, and any future structural decisions will be measured by UN Women's continued ability to deliver for women and girls in increasingly complex environments. That impact depends on a workforce that is protected, valued, and empowered.

UN Women personnel stand ready to continue engaging constructively and responsibly. We ask, in return, that both the Executive Board and our organization uphold a shared commitment to people-centered leadership, characterized by empathy and the recognition that investing in personnel is essential for achieving effectiveness, credibility, and successful outcomes.

Thank you.